

Message Text

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73

ACTION FMC-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-11 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 CG-00 COA-02 DLOS-06

SWF-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 L-03 DRC-01 /059 W

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R 290455Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5295

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SYDNEY 635

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, BEXP, ETRD, PFOR, AS

SUBJ: PORT CONGESTION SURCHARGE

REF: (A) STATE 56635; (B) SYDNEY A-23; SYDNEY 634

1. IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL GENERAL HANNAH AND COMMERCIAL OFFICER MARSHALL, LEON PUNCH, MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, SAID THE N S W MARITIME SERVICES BOARD (MSB) WAS RECENTLY PLACED UNDER HIS JURISDICTION BECAUSE IT HAD BECOME TOO AUTOCRATIC IN ITS OPERATION OF THE PORT AND HAD LOST THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH SHIPPING LINES AND THE LABOR UNIONS. THE PRESENT PORT CONGESTION IS PARTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO A LACK OF ADVANCE PLANNING BY THE M.S.B. AND BY MAKING IT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THE GOVERNMENT, IT IS HOPED THAT MEASURES CAN BE TAKEN WHICH WILL RELIEVE THIS CONGESTION ON A COMPARATIVELY SHORT TIME-SCHEDULE.

2. MINISTER PUNCH PLEADED THAT THE IMPOSITION OF THE SURCHARGE WOULD SERIOUSLY DAMAGE THE PORT OF SYDNEY BY MAKING IT NON-COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER AUSTRALIAN PORTS. HE SAID THE MEASURES ALREADY TAKEN (REF C) CONSTITUTE TWO POSITIVE STEPS BY THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL EASE THINGS IN THE SHORT-TERM AND THAT FURTHER STEPS BEING PLANNED WILL PUT
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THE PORT BACK ON NORMAL OPERATIONS. HE PROMISED TO KEEP

US INFORMED ON THE PROGRESS OF THESE FURTHER STEPS.

3. POST RECOMMENDS THAT THE DEPARTMENT URGE THE FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION TO EITHER POSTPONE APPROVAL OF THE SURCHARGE PROPOSED BY THE ATLANTIC-GULF-AUSTRALIAN-NEW ZEALAND CONFERENCE OR DELAY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURCHARGE AT LEAST FOR A PERIOD OF 90 DAYS, WHICH WILL GIVE THE N S W GOVERNMENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE SERVICES AT SYDNEY.

HANNAH

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